

Its Capacity for Public Affairs.

27

popularly elected he carries on the government without popular co-operation, is bound in his own interest to pursue the commonweal. But he by no means limits the political capacity of the people to the general acquiescence in the support of the rule of a popular prince. In the "Discourses" he ascribes to the people a distinct capacity for definite cooperation in the work of government. With him, as with the ancients, the State is the creation of the great legislator—a Lycurgus, a Solon, a Romulus,—rather a fanciful idea for a modern, as Rousseau, who tried to legislate for Corsica and Poland, found. But the legislator must allow for the co-operation of the people in the maintenance of the State. Machia-velli has, in fact, a high opinion of the capacity of the people in what relates to public affairs. It is, as a rule, wiser—more judicious and less fickle—than the prince, in spite of the opinion of Titus Livy to the contrary. Though the prince is superior to the people in legislation, the people is superior to him in maintaining the public good—is, for instance, the fitter of the two for the election of magistrates. It will hardly ever be persuaded to entrust a magistracy to an infamous man; the prince may easily do so. The prince is naturally inclined to seek his own interest, the people that of the commonwealth.

It is, indeed, difficult to realise that the man who writes the following panegyric of the people and popular government in the "Discourses" is the staunchest champion of absolute government in the "Prince." "It is not without reason that the voice of a people is compared to the voice of a god, for we see that a universal opinion produces marvellous effects by its prognostications, so that it seems as though the people had the occult gift of foreseeing its evil and its good." "Those cities wherein the people is lord make the greatest increase in the shortest time, and far greater than has ever happened in those States which are under a prince. . . . And although princes are superior to peoples in ordaining laws, forming civil institutions, making statutes, new regulations, peoples are so superior in the maintenance of organised things that they undoubtedly add to the glory of those who first organised them." "It is not the good of the individual but the good of the community that constitutes the greatness of cities and re-